



ECHO IDAHO

Behavioral Health in Primary Care

What is Sex Therapy?

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Agenda

1. Definition of sex addiction and diagnostic criteria
2. The Problem
3. Classical vs. Contemporary typologies
4. Tasks
5. Dr. Carne's Rules
6. Multiple Addictions

Definition

- “It is characterized by a persistent pattern of failure to control intense, repetitive sexual urges, resulting in repetitive sexual behavior over an extended period (e.g, six months or more) that causes marked distress or impairment in personal, family, social, educational, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.”
 - ICD-11
- A pathological relationship to a mood-altering experience (sex) that the individual continues to engage in despite adverse consequences and efforts to stop.
 - IITAP

Diagnostic Criteria- One or more of the following four criteria

1. Engaging in repetitive sexual activities has become a central focus of the person's life- to the point of neglecting health and personal care or other interests, activities, and responsibilities.
2. The person has made numerous unsuccessful efforts to control, or significantly reduce, repetitive sexual behavior.
3. The person continues to engage in repetitive sexual behavior despite adverse consequences (e.g., repeated relationship disruption, occupational consequences, negative impacts on health).
4. The person continues to engage in repetitive sexual behavior, even when he/ she derives little or no satisfaction from it.

The Problem

- “Addictive sexual behavior, acting-out behavior we sometimes call it, leads to feelings of shame and depression: it has the effect of masking, covering up, or numbing feelings; and it leads to isolation and a complete loss of control. Healthy sexual behavior, on the other hand, is characterized by mutual respect, a sense of clarity about feelings and communication, joyfulness, and genuine intimacy; it tends to make people feel emotionally and physically safe.”
 - Hope and Recovery, 1987 SAA 12-steps

Classical vs. Contemporary Typologies Reimersma & Sytsma (2013)

Classical Typology

- History of abuse
- Cross addictions
- Insecure attachments
- Co-morbid mood disorders
- Poor impulse control
- Used to soothe toxic emotions

Contemporary Typology

- Rapid onset
- Culture- trending towards virtual and non-relational sex
- Due to explosive growth of internet technology
- Early exposure to graphic sexual material
- Chronic exposure to graphic content online
- Sexual conditioning
- Content- unique, intense, graphic, limitless novelty
- Less trauma history/ attachment problems
- May not be having sex (or may never have had sex)
- May not be able to perform- can include performance anxiety, unrealistic performance standards

Tasks, developed by Dr. Patrick Carnes

Tasks	Performables	Life Competency
1. Break through denial	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make problem list• Make secret list• List of excuses• Consequences inventory• Find therapist, sponsor	Recognize self-delusion
2. Understand the nature of the illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read books on sex addiction• Map out addiction cycle• List of unmanageable moments• Sexual anorexia/ binge-purge cycle• Self-assessment; history	Have knowledge of addiction and recovery

3. Surrender to the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex addiction history • Powerlessness inventory • Unmanageability inventory • Financial costs worksheet • Ten worst moments 	Know personal limits
4. Admit damage from behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Damage Control Plan • Disclosure plan 	Be an expert in self care, crisis avoidance, and crisis management
5. Establish sobriety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sobriety challenges worksheet • Identify relapse scenarios • Fire drill plan • Abstinence list, boundaries list • Personal Crazyness Index 	Manage life without dysfunctional sexual behavior

6. Ensure physical Health/ Integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Physical exam ● Sex addiction matrix ● Sexual health matrix ● Arousal template 	Be an expert in physical self care
7. Participate in a culture of support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Attend regular meeting ● Regular contact with your sponsor ● Meeting presentation ● Outside activities ● Daily rituals 	Build a functional health support system

- These tasks are addressed in Facing the Shadow by Patrick Carnes
- There are 30 tasks in all- 17 through 19 focus on creating personal recovery, 20-30 focus on creating family recovery.

Dr. Carnes' Rules

1. There is a predictable process of recovery. It has its own stages of development, milestones of progress, and tasks to be accomplished
2. The patient will always choose secrecy first. Expect that disclosure will be difficult but it is necessary to start the process and to maintain it. Throughout therapy there will be flights into secrecy because recovery is a progressive unraveling of secrets.
3. The therapist must seek corroboration from all sources including family members, employers, and those who have filed grievances.
4. The therapist must be aware and manage feelings of revulsion. The focus must be on the pain and consequences.

6. If the patient fails to establish sobriety, there is insufficient structure, maintain secrets, an inadequate first step, or all of the above
7. The twelve steps are core to the task-centered approach to therapy.
8. Sooner or later, you and the patient have to decide who is in charge. Early on, it best be you.
9. Therapy must intervene systematically by altering the paradigm and not keeping things the same.
10. If your patient is in a partnership, participation in a 12-Step couples' group is critical
11. All of therapy can be reduced to establishing meaning in life.

Frequencies of Multiple addictions

- Alcohol was the most frequently co-occurring addiction in both males and females at 46%, however in gay males drug abuse was most frequent at 54%.
- Gay males also scored higher on high risk/ dangerous behaviors
- Women scored higher on compulsive spending, compulsive eating, and compulsive cleaning.

Gender Differences

- Males evidenced only 54% greater likelihood of meeting the clinical cut point than women.
- Societal biases regarding gender and sexual ideology may lead to overlooking sex addiction in women, seeing it as a manifestation of another clinical issue such as trauma, bipolar disorder, or borderline personality disorder.

Additional Reading

Facing the Shadows by Patrick Carnes (workbook)

Out of the Shadows by Patrick Carnes

Sex Under the Influence by David Fawcett

Sex Addiction 101 by Robert Weiss

Going Deeper: How the Inner Child Affects Your Sexual Addiction by Eddie Capparucci

A Light in the Dark: The Hidden Legacy of Adult Children of Sex Addicts